



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
District of New Hampshire*

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**MEDIA RELEASE
For Immediate Release
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**NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND
HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREA ("HIDTA") TASK FORCE**

**FIFTH GUILTY PLEA ENTERED IN SALEM MARIJUANA RING CASE –
METHUEN MAN CONVICTED OF DISTRIBUTING
OVER 1000 KILOS OF MARIJUANA**

Re: United States v. James SPITALERE

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE: United States Attorney Tom Colantuono, Drug Enforcement Administration Resident Agent in Charge Leo Ducey, and Salem Police Chief Paul Donovan announced that **James SPITALERE**, date of birth of October 17, 1978, of Methuen, Massachusetts was convicted today on federal marijuana distribution charges.

Spitalere entered a guilty plea before U.S. District Judge Joseph A. DeClerico, Jr. to an information charging him with possession with intent to distribute over 1000 kilograms of marijuana. Spitalere will be sentenced by Judge DiClerico on October 28, 2003 in U.S. District Court in Concord. Spitalere faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Spitalere was arrested in November, 2003 along with seven others as part of a sting operation conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration's Northern New England High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area ("New England HIDTA") Task Force and the Salem Police Department. A criminal complaint against these individuals, issued by U.S. Magistrate Judge James R. Muirhead on January 22, 2003, alleged that they participated in a conspiracy to distribute over 1000 kilos of marijuana in southeastern New Hampshire and northeastern Massachusetts between January, 2000 and November, 2002.

Spitalere is the fifth of eight to enter a guilty plea. Co-defendants **Jose L. MADERA**, of Methuen, Massachusetts, **Sean BOYD and James CLARK**, of Haverhill, Massachusetts and **Arthur SOBERON**, of Salem, New Hampshire have already entered guilty pleas to marijuana trafficking charges.

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U.S. Attorney Colantuono stated, “This multi-defendant case involving interstate marijuana trafficking is a prime example of the effectiveness of New England HIDTA, and the Northern New England HIDTA Task Force. I will continue to commit federal resources to these and other cooperative efforts between federal and local law enforcement agencies.”

The prosecution is being handled by Assistant United States Attorney Joseph N. Laplante, the Lead Attorney for the District of New Hampshire in the New England Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (“New England OCDEF”).